

Potential Need for Future Measures

Note: This white paper was developed within NOAA Fisheries as supporting documentation to provide explanation into the development of the operational measures in the proposed ship strike strategy. The paper should be considered a working document to be used as a tool for policy analysis and to further understand the origin of proposed measures. Comments on the document are welcomed, and may be sent to alerial.jensen@noaa.gov.

A comprehensive Strategy to Reduce Ship Strikes of Right Whales has been developed to address the threat of ship collisions to right whales. The Strategy has been carefully considered, is broad in scope, and proposes a wide range of measure to reduce the threat of ship strikes of right whales. If ship strikes continue unabated even after the imposition of these primary proposed measures, NOAA Fisheries has developed additional potential measures as part of the Strategy that may be imposed in the future as a means to reduce further ship strikes. Action will be taken to implement these additional measures if the objectives of the individual components of the Strategy have not been met, and if right whale ship strike mortalities do not decrease from current levels.

Additional potential measures that have been identified include the geographic extent of the primary proposed measures and their duration (including adjusting the start and ending dates) may be examined for modification. Second, the additional measure of routing vessels farther way from known right whale locations by establishing buffer zones around these areas or further slowing vessels may also be analyzed. NOAA Fisheries will also consider the following three specific additional measures (for the NE region). They are:

Gulf of Maine Area

- *Establish a reporting system for ships entering ports in a specific area.* This measure would impose a requirement for ships to report into a shore station when entering a pre-designated area. This requirement would be a voluntary reporting system implemented as a condition of port entry. In exchange for the ship reporting certain information, NOAA or the USCG would provide right whale sighting data and other relevant information to the reporting mariner. Its principal value is to increase mariner awareness and education, and to provide mariners with the latest known right whale sightings. Additional benefit from the system is information on ship traffic volume and routes that could be useful in determining future management measures.
- *Establish an IMO-adopted Mandatory Ship Reporting system.* If it is determined by the port State control officers that compliance with the port entry reporting system as set forth above is low, the next step would be to proceed with a proposal to IMO to establish a Mandatory Ship Reporting System.

Great South Channel

- *Uniform speed restrictions for all ships over 65 feet within or crossing the TSS.*
This measure would be in addition to the proposed measures, which are speed restrictions in this area for vessels between 65 feet and 300 gross tons and an area to be avoided (ATBA) by ships of 300 gross tons in an area adjacent to the TSS. The primary purpose of this measure would be to impose a speed restriction on the 300 gross ton vessels that would provide protection for those whales occurring in or near the lanes. This measure is not recommended as one of the primary measures, because of the burden it imposes on the 300 gross tons vessels (many of which are international ship traffic), the fact that the whales do not normally set up in the lanes in this area, and because the tool of the establishment of a dynamic management area could be used to provide protection if whales are sighted in the lanes. If, however, any of these parameters change and it is found that the imposition of such a speed restriction is necessary, then this measure may have to be employed. The agency may consider lifting the speed restriction when “no” whales are in this area.

Off Race Point

Establishment of an area to be avoided (ATBA), except for the lanes of the IMO-adopted TSS, where speed restrictions would be in effect. This proposed additional measure would establish a prohibited area for ships 300 gross tons and above throughout the Off Race Point area, but would allow for passage in lanes already established by the IMO-adopted TSS. This is a relatively stringent measure and would restrict traffic around the Off Race Point area to the designated lanes as well as the imposition of the primary measure of uniform speed restrictions in this area. Therefore, it would provide protection for the whales occurring both inside and outside of the lanes.